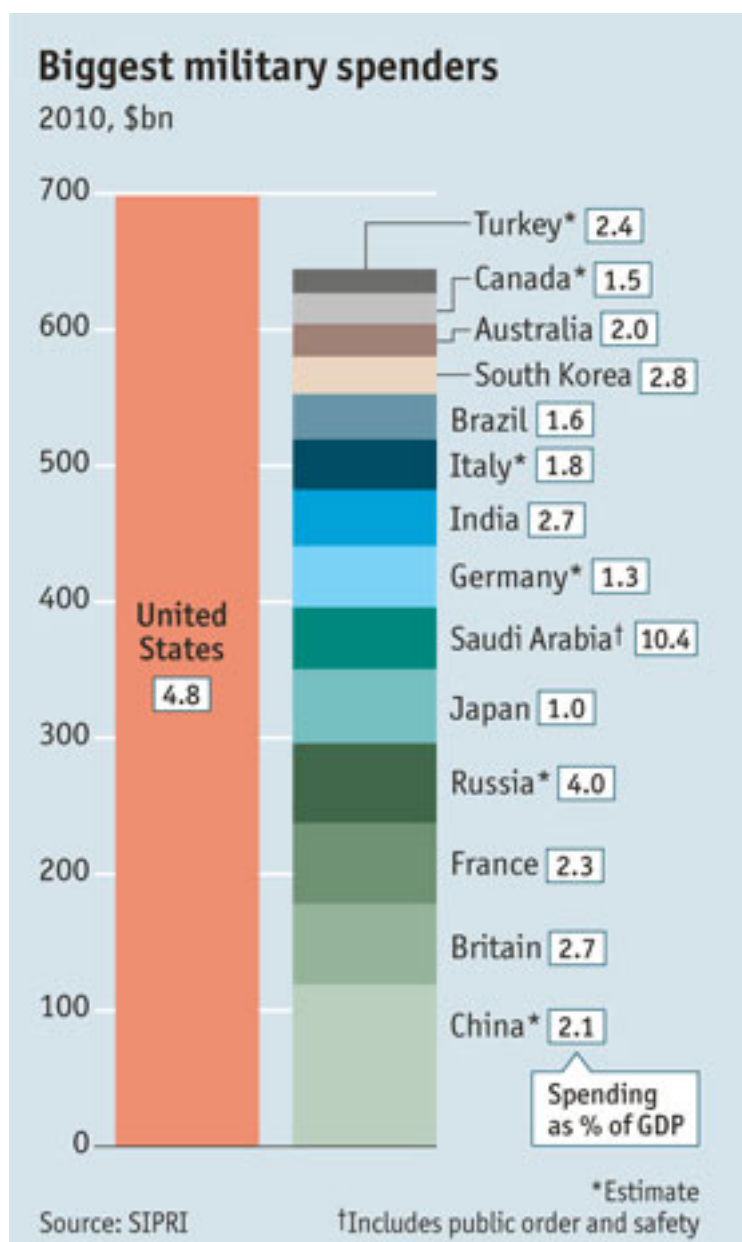


40 WEEKS EARL BLUMENAUER #17 A More Efficient Defense Budget 40 IDEAS

Background



While nothing is more important than keeping America and our men and women in uniform safe, current U.S. defense spending consumes too much of our nation's limited wealth.

We have witnessed 13 straight years of growth in the Pentagon's budget due to Congress' inability to make hard choices on defense spending, each year opting for an "*all of the above*" strategy that puts the funding of an already bloated military budget ahead of any semblance of fiscal responsibility.

This year alone, defense spending will consume 57 percent of our *total discretionary budget*. When you include Afghanistan, civil defense, Veterans, military aid, and intelligence gathering agencies into this number, the total is close to \$850 billion a year. To view this another way, our military spends enough *every single second* to fully pay for a student's in-state tuition at a 4-year college

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It's clear to people across the nation that Congress can no longer separate national security from fiscal responsibility, However, the American people understand. Recently, a Stimson Center poll found that, on average, Americans feel the defense budget should go down by *18 percent* in 2013. Instead, we'll decrease spending *by less than half of one percent*

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Solution

The debate between defending America, *or* rebuilding and renewing America, is a false one. We can – and we must – do both. Without more cuts to the Pentagon, we will undermine the very security here at home we aim to procure through more and more military spending. Crumbling bridges and roads, failing schools, and a massive national debt all pose a greater national threat to America's power abroad than modest and reasonable cuts to defense spending.

We know how to do this. From the CATO institute to Bowles-Simpson, we've shown that it's

possible to meet our 21st century needs for national defense while keeping our promises to future generations of Americans here at home.

In addition to ending the war in Afghanistan more quickly and safely, there are many ways to decrease defense spending. For example, increasing efficiency in naval deployment can reduce the need for more warships. We don't need a growing supercarrier fleet. The United States' eleven aircraft carriers add up to more than the rest of the world's combined, and many of the other countries that have aircraft carriers are our allies. Upgrading our nuclear arsenal with capabilities that correspond to no new military requirement doesn't make sense.

Instead of making the tough choices necessary on defense spending, my Republican colleagues decided *let's give the Pentagon even more than they've even asked for* and provide them this funding by eliminating food stamp benefits for 2 million people, reducing benefits for 44 million more, curtailing Meals on Wheels, and eliminating school lunches for 280,000 children.

The bottom-line is that Congress needs to show some leadership and an ability to make difficult choices. That's why I lead, with Representatives Lee and Frank, an [amendment to cut defense spending for Fiscal Year 13 by \\$8 billion](#), aligning current spending levels with those authorized by the Budget Control Act.

In the coming weeks, I will continue to work to right-size our defense budget by offering additional amendments on the House floor to cut wasteful defense spending.

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